

VZCZCXRO6622
RR RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR
DE RUEHCH #0009/01 0110613
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 110613Z JAN 10 ZDS
FM AMEMBASSY CHISINAU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8740
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 000009

C O R R E C T E D COPY (DECL ADDED)

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/UMB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/10/2020
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [PINR](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: OUR MOLDOVA ALLIANCE ON VERGE OF SPLIT

CHISINAU 00000009 001.2 OF 002

Classified by: Charge d'Affaires Marcus Micheli
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Our Moldova Alliance (AMN), one of the four parties of the ruling Alliance for European Integration (AIE), is on the verge of a schism following a heated December 12 party congress. Though AMN Chairman (and Deputy Parliament Speaker) Serafim Urechean retained his post, a faction supporting party Deputy Chair Veaceslav Untila left the hall in protest. Untila told the Ambassador on December 16 that his group would split, but promised that he would continue to support the Alliance -- which currently has 53 members in the 101-seat Parliament -- while attempting to attract smaller non-parliamentary parties to a new political force to compete in the next parliamentary elections. A schism within the AMN may signal the death knell of that party, which is has been plummeting in the polls. End Summary.

Fireworks at AMN Party Congress

¶2. (SBU) The AMN convened its party congress on December 12 to elect a new Chairman. Urechean was initially the only candidate, but Deputy Chair Veaceslav Untila, calling for stronger party leadership, put forth his own name. Delegates squabbled over whether to vote by secret ballot -- Untila supporting and Urechean opposing -- but in the end, 260 of 423 party representatives backed Untila's proposal.

¶3. (SBU) However, a dispute continued over voting process and procedures. Representatives of the two camps scuffled on the floor of the hall, exchanging accusations of corruption and dictatorship in the party, with the dissenters being accused of acting in the interests of the Communist Party. Untila then declared he would not participate in the vote and left the hall, accompanied by some 100 supporters, including Iurie Colesnic, another party Deputy Chair, and Sergiu Baltaga, leader of the Party's Youth Organization.

¶4. (SBU) After the dissenters departed, Urechean was re-elected as Chairman. Key AMN leaders, such as Deputy Prime Minister Osipov, Minister of Agriculture Cosarciuc, Minister of Education Bujor, Minister of IT and Telecommunications Oleinic, and Chairman of the Parliament's Legal

Committee Plesca, supported him. In his acceptance speech, Urechean promised not to persecute his opponents, who he predicted would "change their minds after a night of reflections."

Urechean Calm After Stormy Congress...

¶5. (C) In a pre-congress December 2 with the Ambassador, Urechean had expressed concern that Prime Minister Filat had been trying to lure Untila into a "murky partnership" in order to wrest control of the AMN. Urechean said at the time that if Untila took over, he would merge AMN with Filat's Liberal Democratic Party.

¶6. (C) However, in a December 14 meeting with the Ambassador, Urechean downplayed the significance of dissent at the congress, claiming that "nothing really happened." He said it was natural for his leadership to be challenged; this was part of the democratic process. He vowed to try to improve relations with Untila, who he said would not be dismissed as head of the AMN parliamentary faction. (Note: However, Urechean also said that if Untila wanted to leave the party, he could.)

...But Warns PM's Meddling Could Threaten Alliance

¶7. (C) Nonetheless, Urechean warned ominously that if Untila's move had been coordinated with Filat, this would "end the Alliance." He said that he had talked to Filat about the issue, and that Filat had admitted "holding discussions" with Untila, but claimed that he had never promised anything to Untila. (Note: In response to the

CHISINAU 00000009 002.2 OF 002

Ambassador's further queries, Urechean first said he thought it was "not possible" that Filat would try to undermine him, but then said he could not be sure.)

Untila Plans New Party

¶8. (C) In a December 16 meeting, Untila explained to the Ambassador that after the last opinion poll showed only 1.2 percent support for AMN, he had become convinced that a leadership change was necessary. Urechean, with whom his relations had "always been tense," did not seem to understand this. Untila said he had a "moral right" to be party leader, and that he was supported by "nine out of 14 party raion (county) chairs and 21 out of 37 local chairs." 180 delegates had left the congress with him. Untila also said he would have beaten Urechean if the congress election -- which he described as "a circus" -- had been "properly organized."

¶9. (C) Untila said he would challenge the vote with the Ministry of Justice. "So far" he was still in the AMN, but was planning to leave, taking his supporters, including the raion chairmen, with him. Untila also assured the Ambassador that he would stick with the Alliance, even if his group split. He said he would attempt to merge with several small, extra-parliamentary parties in advance of the next elections.

Comment

¶10. (C) AMN is the weakest link in the Alliance

for European Integration. The party, once a leading force while in the opposition, has been in a steep decline, with recent opinion polls showing that it will not clear the five percent hurdle to enter Parliament in the event of early elections next year. Untila's departure -- which appears highly likely -- will deal a further blow to the AMN. Not only may Untila take some of the party's youth leaders and its regional heavyweights, but he is also one of party's principal financial sponsors.

¶11. (C) But while the split will further weaken the AMN, it should not affect the stability of the government as long as Untila's MPs continue to vote with their Alliance partners, as is expected. (Note: It is unclear at this point how many AMN MPs would follow Untila should he leave the party. End Note) Potentially more serious is the strain in relations between Urechean, who has tended to back former Alliance presidential candidate Marian Lupu in Lupu's disputes with the PM, and Filat. However, at present Urechean appears uncertain what role, if any, Filat played, and in his weakened state has no current alternative to supporting the current government and PM.

MICHELI